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A HIGH SCHOOL COURSE IN ENGLISH

In an article in the February 1899 number of *THE SCHOOL REVIEW* the lack of uniformity in the existing courses in secondary English was brought out by means of tables compiled from material furnished by many representative high schools of the country. From these tables the writer deduced the need of an ideal, or model course, for the guidance of the teachers of English the country over. There is no doubt that this need is widely felt, and that many teachers are busy in developing practical, if not ideal working plans. The time of arrival of the model course might be hastened by a study of these various attempts. The following course is presented, not as a model by any means, but as a practical one which seems to be working well:

FIRST YEAR

2 ½ hours a week. (Every other day)

COMPOSITION — RHETORIC

First half-year

GRAMMAR — 1 ½ hours.

Spelling, capitals, punctuation.

Review of grammar.

See Buehler: *Exercises in English*.

Study of the clause and the sentence (based on some book of the American prose).

* COMPOSITION — 1 hour.

Simple narration and description. (Inventional, with elementary outlines.)

See Keeler and Davis: *English Composition*.

Second half-year

* COMPOSITION — 1 hour.

Simple narration and description. Material furnished from history or literature.

*All compositions, after correction

by the teacher, are revised or rewritten by the pupil, and again inspected by the teacher, usually in the presence of the pupil.

AIMS

To secure correct grammatical use.

To stimulate interest in self-expression through writing.

LITERATURE

First half-year

AMERICAN PROSE.

Reading of Irving, Hawthorne, Cooper.

(Taken up but slightly in class in connection with grammar and composition.)

Second half-year

AMERICAN POETRY — 1 ½ hours.

Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Bryant, Holmes.

Study of one representative work
of each.

Reading of other works of each.

Memorizing of selections.

Study of lives and times of American authors.

(Simple figures of speech.)

AIMS

To stimulate enjoyment of literature
(appeal to tastes and feelings).

To give knowledge of American
period of history and literature.

To include the college requirement.

SECOND YEAR

2 ½ hours a week. (Every other day.)

COMPOSITION—RHETORIC

1 hour

First half-year

STUDY OF THE PARAGRAPH.

See Scott and Denney: *Composition-Rhetoric*.

Second half-year

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

See Meiklejohn: *The English Language*. Part III.

Word study: derivation, synonyms,
prefixes, suffixes, stems; accurate use.

Figures of speech.

COMPOSITION.

Narration and description combined, with especial attention to paragraphs.

*Correction as in first year.

AIMS

To secure right understanding of
the paragraph, and proper use
of it.

To enlarge the vocabulary.

To secure accurate use of words.

LITERATURE

1 ½ hours

NINETEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE.

Scott, Maculay, Coleridge, De-
Quincey, (Dickens), Tennyson,
(Lamb), (Thackeray), (Words-
worth), (George Eliot), (Byron).

Study of a few masterpieces.

Reading of other works of the
time.

Memorizing of selections.

Slight study of literary character-
istics (forms of literature—essay,
novel, etc.).

Beginning of study of verse.

Study of life and times of each
author.

AIMS

To lay the foundation for apprecia-
tion of literature.

To give knowledge of the period.

To include the college require-
ment.

THIRD YEAR

2 ½ hours a week. (Every other day.)

COMPOSITION—RHETORIC

1 ½ hours

First half-year

STUDY OF THE SENTENCE; long, short, loose, periodic.

SKILLFUL CHOICE OF WORDS.

See Scott and Denney: *Composition-Rhetoric*.

COMPOSITION.

Retelling of narratives and descriptions requiring condensation, with attention to words and sentences.

*Second half-year*Study of exposition and argument. (*cf.* Burke).

Study of detailed outlines.

Problems of connected theme.

See Scott and Denney: *Composition-Rhetoric*.

COMPOSITION.

Exposition: making of outlines.

Long compositions.

*Rewriting and correction as in first year.

AIMS

To secure good sentence-structure and skillful choice of words.

To cultivate ability, to make and develop good outlines (logical thought).

LITERATURE

1 hour

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE.

(Perhaps some of late seventeenth century.)

Burns, Addison, Goldsmith, Steele, Burke, (Swift), Pope, (De Foe), (Dryden).

Study of a few masterpieces.

Careful study of Burke (as fine exposition and argument).

Reading of other works of the time.

Memorizing of selections.

Study of main literary characteristics (plot, character, allusions, language).

Continuation of study of verse.

Study of life and times of each author.

AIMS

To stimulate appreciation of literature.

To give appreciation of logical thought.

To give knowledge of the period.

To include the college requirement.

FOURTH YEAR

3 hours a week

COMPOSITION—RHETORIC

1 hour

Review of different kinds of composition, with more extended study of each.

NARRATION—with differing time standpoint. (Proportion, selection, climax, suspense.)

DESCRIPTION—dependent on point of view. (Selection, sequence.)

EXPOSITION AND ARGUMENT—with reference to effectiveness. (Proposition, selection, arrangement.)

Detailed outlines.

Qualities of style—clearness, force.

* Long themes: rewriting (and correction as in first year).

(Three themes to be delivered before the class.)

AIMS.

To secure appreciation of the different forms of writing, and some ability to handle each form intelligently.

LITERATURE

2 hours

SHAKESPEARE AND MILTON.

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

—A review of the different peri-

ods by means of critical study of new representative masterpieces, too difficult for earlier years, and by study of the lives of the principal authors and of their times.

As wide as possible reading in connection with the different periods.

Memorizing of selections.

Literary criticism—plot, character, moral, appropriateness of verse form; *style*.

AIMS.

To stimulate appreciation of poetry and love of literature.

To give knowledge of the history of English literature—a comprehensive idea of the whole field and a closer acquaintance with some parts of it.

To include the college requirement.

The number of hours given to English must be understood to be adapted to classical school, where a great deal of attention is devoted to language-study. The time is divided almost equally between literature and composition-rhetoric. The term composition-rhetoric signifies the principles and the practice of composition. Literature and composition are treated as parts of the same whole. The literature serves to illustrate the principles of composition, for from it they are derived; and it furnishes subjects and inspiration for themes. Each year's work is a part of a definite progression in material and in aim.

Composition is developed in the order of the whole—composition, the paragraph, the sentence, and words—the order of development in the mind of the child. The writing of themes is weekly; the themes are corrected by the teacher, revised or rewritten by the pupil, and again examined by the teacher with unfailing regularity. The desirable daily writing seems, under present conditions, impossible—at least if correction of all written work is considered indispensable. Written lessons in the other branches of study—a weekly written translation, a record of chemistry experiments—do much toward making daily

writing for each pupil practicable. Each theme written during the four years is corrected with regard to some one principle (or, perhaps, more than one later in the course), which the pupil understands before he writes, and which he has in mind while he writes. Thus, the first half-year mistakes in grammar, capitals, and punctuation are weeded out with rigorous insistence; and, subsequently in the course, such errors are not expected to occur: if they do occur, they are accounted grave ones. If, after the study of the paragraph in the second year, a third-year pupil constructs an incorrect paragraph he knows his mistake merits greater severity of criticism than it would have called forth earlier in his course. The kinds of composition are taken up in their order of difficulty, proceeding from narration to argument; while the last year affords work which is in the nature of both a review of that of the other three years and further development of it also.

The order of the work in literature is determined by the difficulty of the subject-matter and a definite chronological sequence. The latter of these does not interfere with the former; and it has distinct intrinsic advantages. Such an order fixes in the mind of the pupil, without extra expenditure of direct effort on his part, many of the fundamental facts of the history of literature. When he has finished the course he ought not to be able to think that Goldsmith and Milton were contemporaries, or that Scott lived before Swift. Each great period will stand out distinctly in his mind; each great writer will be associated with his own time. It is true that some American literature is too difficult for first-year pupils, some nineteenth century literature too difficult for second-year pupils; but such work will not be given at those times. It will be kept for the fourth year, which offers a review of the whole history of English literature in its proper chronological order. The separate classics taken up vary somewhat from year to year. This is partly due to the variation in the college requirement. The same great artists and masters of style are studied each year; and the list always includes the various forms of literature—the essay, the novel, the epic, the lyric, the drama. The method of taking up each masterpiece is determined by the aim of the literature work for that year, an aim which is part of a definite series of aims which all contribute to the great purpose in the teaching of literature.

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